

Air Carrier Access Amendments Act

The Air Carrier Access Amendments Act will protect the rights of passengers with disabilities in air transportation.

The Issue

For more than 30 years, the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) has prohibited discrimination based on disability in air travel. Despite this progress, too many travelers with disabilities encounter significant barriers—such as damaged assistive devices and wheelchairs, delayed assistance, ineffective communications, and lack of seating accommodations. Absent legislation ensuring 21st Century access to air travel, people with disabilities will be left behind and unable to compete in today's economy or enjoy travel opportunities other Americans experience.

Travelers may currently file a disability-related complaint with an airline or the Department of Transportation (DOT). According to the most recent data available, in 2015 passengers filed more than 30,000 disability-related complaints with airlines and nearly 1,000 disability-related complaints directly with DOT. The majority of these complaints related to failure to provide assistance and seating accommodation.

Unfortunately, many of the difficulties passengers with disabilities encounter in air travel are not sufficiently addressed by the ACAA. Damaged assistive devices and wheelchairs, inadequate training for airline and contractor personnel, and inaccessible airplanes and features result in missed flights, injuries, and delays that lead to lost time and missed opportunities for people with disabilities. Additionally, current law lacks a guaranteed private right of action and individuals filing a disability-related complaint have limited opportunities to seek redress.

The Air Carrier Access Amendments Act will:

- Strengthen ACAA enforcement to include specific protections of the rights of passengers with disabilities and a private right of action.
- Ensure airplanes are designed to accommodate people with disabilities and airlines meet accessibility standards, including safe and effective boarding and deplaning, visually accessible announcements and better stowage options for assistive devices.
- Improve access to seating accommodations.
- Close service gaps in air travel for passengers with disabilities.